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CPYRGHT

SENATE REACTS TO HELMS LETTER

HARRY K. SMITH: "The spy people took a tongue lashing on the Hill today. Joseph McCaffrey reports."

MCCAFFREY: "The Senate was stunned today by what one of its members called affrontry. Others regarded it as stupidity. The shocker was brought to the Senate's attention by Minnesota's Eugene McCarthy, who showed a letter written by the head of the CIA, Richard Helms -- written to the St. Louis Globe Dispatch -- Globe Democrat, in which Helms praised an editorial, which was a scathing attack on Senator Fulbright for his efforts to broaden that watchdog committee of the Senate over the CIA.

"McCarthy said that Helms' action was entirely out of order and that he owes an apology to every member of the Senate. The Majority Leader of the Senate, Mike Mansfield, said, 'I'm more than a little surprised the Director of the silent service has seen fit to write such a letter.' Senator Leverett Saltonstall, who's a member of the CIA watchdog committee, said he was surprised at the letter, pointing out there was nothing personal in Fulbright's efforts to expand the watchdog committee.

CPYRGHT "Another Committee member, Milton Young, said the letter was a shock to him. A third Committee member, Senator John Stennis, called it an unfortunate letter. Utah's Frank Moss said he was disturbed and shocked. McCarthy, the original author of the resolution to broaden the watchdog committee, said of Helms, 'This is one of the problems you run into when you promote career men. It's a little like the trouble you run into when you arm slaves. It takes a little while for them to adjust.'

"It was coincidental that today a House Armed Services Subcommittee voted that our spies should periodically get a government subsidized vacation. The measure would authorize the CIA to send its overseas based agents someplace where they can relax and get away from the, quote, 'conditions,' unquote, which prompted the need for relaxation in the first place. All, of course, at government expense. Tonight there are some members of the Senate who have a certain CIA person they would like to send on a permanent vacation."